



Practical Strategies to Achieve Nigeria’s 3 Million Barrels Per Day Target

Nigeria sits on one of the richest hydrocarbon endowments in the world, yet it produces far below its capabilities. As at January 1, 2026, the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (“NUPRC”) declared proven oil and condensate reserves of 37.01 billion barrels and proven natural gas reserves of 215.19 trillion cubic feet (tcf), which, on global pedestal implies that Nigeria owns the eleventh (11th) largest oil reserve and ninth (9th) largest gas reserve, second only to Libya in African crude reserves. Despite this, crude and condensate production output averaged only about 1.6 million barrels per day in 2025, which is only a little more than half of the three-million-barrel target that the Federal Government of Nigeria has set for the end of the decade. The gap is not a story of geology; it is a story of investment, infrastructure, security and execution.

It is against this backdrop that the NNPC Gas Master Plan 2026 (the “GMP” or “Plan”), launched in January 2026 (building on the 2008 framework) and the Decade of Gas initiative, have become so significant.

At first glance, a gas master plan may seem unrelated to the achievement of an oil production target. In Nigeria’s geology and fiscal reality, however, oil and gas are inseparable: a meaningful share of the target is made up of condensate- a gas associated liquid that also sits outside the country’s OPEC quota; most new barrels will come from integrated deepwater and associated gas developments; and the processing hubs, pipelines and commercial frameworks that monetise gas are what render the accompanying oil economically recoverable. The GMP is, in other words, as much an oil-enabling plan as a gas plan. The strategies below, drawn from and aligned with it, chart how the three-million-barrel ambition can be realised.

NIGERIA’S OIL & GAS AT A GLANCE	
Proven oil & condensate reserves	37.01 billion barrels
Proven natural gas reserves	215.19 trillion cubic feet (Tcf)
2025 average production	~1.6 million barrels per day
National target	3 million bbl/d (crude + condensate)
Target horizon	By 2030 interim ~2.7 million bbl/d by 2027
Global reserves ranking	~11th (oil) · ~9th (gas) · 2nd in Africa (oil)

Sources: NUPRC national petroleum reserves declaration (1 January 2026); NNPC and Federal Government production targets. Figures rounded.

Ten Practical Strategies

The Plan converts a familiar list of national aspirations into a structured, costed and sequenced programme. Ten priorities stand out.

1. Accelerate Deepwater Oil and Gas Development

Deepwater holds Nigeria’s largest pools of untapped, high deliverability reserves. The accelerated development of deepwater hubs such as Zabazaba, Agbami and the Erha-Bosi cluster is, rightly, a central plank of the Plan. Competitive and stable fiscal terms, together with clear gas pricing frameworks, are essential to crowd in the long-cycle capital these projects demand.



The recent execution of a model deepwater production sharing contract and the resolution of the long-running OPL 245 dispute show both what is possible when fiscal clarity and legal certainty align and how quickly capital responds once they do.

2. Expand Central Processing Facilities (CPFs)

Processing of the reserves is now the sector's binding constraint: the hubs earmarked for CPF expansion together account for roughly 60 per cent (60%) of the country's reserves. Targeted investment to upgrade and build out capacity across clusters such as Gbaran–Soku–Obagi–OBOB, the Utorogu–Ughelli–Okpokunou axis and Escravos would produce volumes that are otherwise stranded behind plant bottlenecks. In practical terms, competitive advantage is shifting from who owns the gas to who can process and evacuate it.

3. Close the Infrastructure Gaps

Midstream infrastructure transports oil and gas from the wellhead to demand centres; its absence leads to stranded production. Flagship projects, such as the Ajaokuta–Kaduna–Kano (AKK) pipeline, the OB3 line and the proposed African Atlantic Gas Pipeline are pivotal to connectivity and evacuation. With over 2,500 kilometres of pipeline already in place and an estimated US\$22 billion still required to complete the planned network, accelerating delivery (the River Niger crossing on AKK is already complete) is indispensable to the three-million-barrel goal.

4. Monetise Gas to Underwrite Oil

Lifting gas monetisation from about Sixty per cent (60%) today to seventy-five per cent (75%) by 2027 and eighty per cent (80%) by 2030 is not a gas footnote to an oil story; it is central to it. Curbing routine flaring and reinjection converts wasted molecules into revenue, and that revenue is frequently what makes the associated oil commercially viable in the first place. With the Plan targeting roughly Ten Billion standard cubic feet per day (10 Bscf/d) by 2027 and Twelve Billion standard cubic feet per day (12 Bscf/d) by 2030, gas economics will increasingly determine how much oil actually flows.

5. Strengthen Governance and Implementation

Targets are met by institutions, not intentions. The Plan's proposed Implementation Assurance Team (IAT), led by a Head of GMP Implementation and supported by multi-disciplinary cluster managers, is precisely the delivery architecture that Nigeria has too often lacked. Clear ownership, streamlined decision-making, and disciplined coordination among stakeholders will determine whether milestones are hit or merely admired.

6. Align Partners Behind Delivery

No single operator can close these gaps alone. Sustained alignment with industry groupings such as the Independent Petroleum Producers Group (IPPG) and the Oil Producers Trade Section (OPTS) on shared pipelines, processing access and virtual or compressed gas distribution networks is essential to sequence projects sensibly and avoid duplicated, stranded spend.

7. Resolve the Power Sector Logjam

The power sector's liquidity and payment performance problems have long throttled the gas-to-power value chain, and with it the demand that anchors upstream economics. Targeted fiscal incentives, cost-reflective tariffs and credible debt resolution mechanisms would restore bankable offtake and bankability of offtake, which is what ultimately justifies new field development, oil and gas alike.

8. Embrace Digital Transformation

A unified digital platform consolidating data across assets, improving transparency and sharpening decision-making would allow the sector to see itself clearly for the first time. Tools that track project progress, optimise operations and surface bottlenecks in real time are a low-cost, high-leverage route to higher and more reliable output.

9. Make ESG a Competitive Advantage

Access to global capital increasingly raises environmental, social and governance performance. By embedding decarbonisation and a credible flaredown trajectory into project design, Nigeria can position its barrels among the more responsibly produced, widening, rather than narrowing, the pool of investors willing to finance them.

10. Sustain Exploration and Appraisal

A three-million-barrel plateau cannot be held on today's discoveries alone. Sustained exploration and appraisal across the hubs, reinforced by the 2025 licensing round of fifty (50) blocks, which could attract about Ten Billion United States Dollars (US\$10,000,000.00) and add around Four Hundred Thousand (400,000) barrels per day, is what keeps the project pipeline and the reserves base, replenished for the long term.

Conclusion

Three million barrels per day is ambitious, but it is attainable with the right combination of strategic investment, policy reform and stakeholder collaboration.



By prioritising deepwater development, processing and evacuation infrastructure, gas monetisation and credible governance, Nigeria can finally convert a toptier reserves base into top-tier production and reposition its energy sector as a foundation for industrialisation, fiscal stability and energy security. The NNPC Gas Master Plan 2026 supplies the roadmap; the task now is execution. The country's real constraints are no longer beneath the ground, but above it.

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